



IMAGES *of Success*



2010-2011 Annual Report

North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Our cover photos are of “VR” consumers on the job – (l to r) Jaime Cisneros, a meat cutter at Martin Pork in Falcon; Ryan King, an employment specialist at RHA Howell in La Grange; and Jillian Daughtry, a teacher at Coats Elementary School in Coats.



I M A G E S *of Success*

2010-2011 Annual Report

North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Services

The Year by the Numbers

- VR assisted 6,303 North Carolinians in achieving successful employment outcomes.
- Independent living objectives were achieved by 1,898 Independent Living program participants.
- Assistive Technology provided 8,726 individuals with equipment loans or demonstrations.
- Disability Determination closed 224,757 cases involving Social Security Disability, Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid Disability benefits.

VR in 2011: A Broader Approach, Better Tools, Improved Outcomes

After years in the planning, the N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services last year passed two milestones in how we prepare and equip our staff to serve our customers – North Carolinians with disabilities and the all-important businesses and organizations that annually provide them jobs by the thousands.



Linda Harrington
Director

**N.C. Division of Vocational
Rehabilitation Services**

- A few years back, we began laying groundwork for a system-wide recommitment to a “dual-customer approach” that views our consumers with disabilities and the businesses who can benefit from hiring them as co-equal customers. Comprehensive training was undertaken to enable staff to readily identify and meet our consumers’ employment needs and match them with employers’ hiring needs. After a strategic corps of VR staff received the training, they *became* the trainers, systematically conducting staff sessions across the state. By mid-2011, staff in all our service offices had undergone the training, with new employees receiving it soon after the hire.
- In 2011, we completed the initial phases of replacing our 12-year-old case-management system. The new BEAM software provides a shared client database with which we and our sister agencies serving the Deaf, the hard of hearing and the blind can serve our customers more seamlessly. With the implementation of BEAM’s final phase in mid-2012, counselors will have tools to better ensure timely provision of services, and employers can post job openings and review information about consumers who match their jobs’ requirements.

In its final year, while funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act supported a range of improvements, the support of our internship and on-the-job training programs was particularly beneficial to the business of matching applicants with jobs. In 2011, 302 consumers in these programs achieved their employment objectives. Their annualized earnings of \$4,230,772 produce a return of \$4.25 for every dollar spent by the two programs. While services to these consumers incurred other costs, the net outcomes helped secure VR’s reputation for cost-effectiveness.

As with general employment, the number of our consumers’ employment outcomes tends to rise and fall with economic conditions. But last year, the news for VR consumers was somewhat better than for the general population: From October 2010 to September 2011 – while the state’s employment rate fell from 90.01 to 89.5 percent – the number of VR’s employment outcomes rose by 5.7 percent, from 5,961 to 6,303.

With our continuing economic troubles, that result isn’t accidental. It’s a product of the hard work and commitment of VR staff across the state and a range of effective partnerships – with our consumers and their families, with other service agencies and policymakers, and with legislators and administrators at every level of government.



Evaluation and Counseling



**Jillian Daughtry
Coats**

VR provides services to people with disabilities to assist them in getting or keeping a job. Rehabilitation begins with an assessment of the consumer's strengths, skills and experience. Jointly developed by the consumer and counselor, each individual's plan for employment is carefully monitored and, if needed, adjustments are made. Plans may include: diagnostic services; physical and mental restoration; assistive technology; transportation; modifications to vehicle, home, job and worksite; and others.

Among consumers who completed their rehabilitation plans in FFY 2011, VR provided:

- Assessment services to 11,101 individuals;
- Diagnosis and treatment of impairments to 6,409;
- Counseling and guidance to 4,016.

Categories of services offered beyond the assessment stage include: employment services, rehabilitation technology, training, and personal assistance services.

Benefits Counseling

In North Carolina, the federal Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach initiative operates under the name Making Employment a New Success (MEANS). Program specialists offer counseling to recipients of Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance to help them understand how going to work may affect their benefits payments. For recipients of traditional VR services, the counseling has helped remove disincentives to seek employment.

- VR's MEANS program has served more than 13,803 Social Security beneficiaries since the program's inception in 2000.
- The program is joined by similar initiatives under Easter Seals UCP of North Carolina, Life Plan Trust and Tri-County Industries of Rocky Mount to offer benefits planning assistance throughout North Carolina.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing

VR provides services to individuals who are Deaf, hard-of-hearing, or late-deafened to assist them in preparing for, obtaining, or maintaining employment. Counselors work with consumers to help them make informed choices about their job goals and what, among a range of specialized services and equipment, is needed to help



meet those goals. Based in 12 of VR's local offices, specially trained counselors assist citizens with hearing loss across North Carolina. In FFY 2011, VR:

- Provided services to 2,535 consumers with hearing loss.
- Assisted 332 consumers with hearing loss achieve successful employment outcomes.
- Continued to equip local offices with advanced technology to improve consumers' access to services and their employment outcomes.

School-to-Life Services

VR has partnered with local schools across the state to assist students in making a successful transition from their school life to jobs and careers. Services are designed to assist individuals with disabilities – physical, mental or learning-related – who require assistance to prepare for, locate, or maintain employment compatible with their interests, skills and potential. For eligible students, VR offers vocational guidance and assistance with training, job placement, and other services. Referrals may be made by a parent, teacher, social worker, school counselor or nurse, or an individual may refer himself or herself.

- In FFY 2011, VR served 17,387 youth, 22 and under, with disabilities.
- VR counselors provided services to 11,501 high school students in 357 high schools across the state.



**Ryan King
LaGrange**

Employment Services

Getting or keeping a job is the main goal of the partnership between the consumer and VR. The process begins with evaluation of the consumer's interests, abilities and aptitudes for different kinds of jobs. The employment plan may include college or vocational training, on-the-job training, job coaching, or supported employment. VR staff often provide information on résumé preparation, interviewing, developing job leads, and assistance in locating a job. After employment, the VR counselor and consumer stay in contact to help make sure the job is a good match.

- In FFY 2011, VR assisted 6,303 North Carolinians in achieving a successful employment outcome.
- Consumers' weekly earnings before receiving services averaged \$50. After employment, the average – reflecting a range of earning levels and full- and part-time jobs – increased to \$280.



- Individuals employed after receiving VR services earned a combined total of \$1.75 million per week.



**Jaime Cisneros
Falcon**

Services to Employers

Crucial to VR's mission are North Carolina's businesses who each year hire thousands of individuals served by VR. Because each of our referrals is screened, employers can feel more confident that they are a good prospect for their company, and they benefit from services like customized follow-up and on-the-job training that can help make sure the new employee remains a good match for the job. For more than 90 years, VR has been the state's premier resource on issues related to disabilities in the workplace.

- Screening, job-matching and training can reduce employers' recruitment time and costs.
- Employers can benefit from on-site consultations by professionals like our rehabilitation engineers who help ensure that the physical workplace is a good fit for the new employee.
- Employers can benefit from these services at no cost. They may also enjoy tax incentives for hiring a VR referral.

Community Rehabilitation

VR is able to extend its services for people with disabilities through programmatic partnerships with community rehabilitation programs across the state. These programs are equipped to offer a range of job-placement and support services to VR consumers with specialized needs. Community rehabilitation services include: vocational evaluation; job development; job coaching; individual or group supported employment; and work adjustment activities designed to help individuals improve work skills, work behaviors, and emotional/physical tolerances for a range of jobs.

- In FFY 2011, 9,716 consumers received services from community rehabilitation programs that have partnered with VR.
- Of that number, 2,237 achieved their employment objectives and many others continued to progress toward theirs.
- VR directly administers two community rehabilitation programs – WorkSource East in Goldsboro and WorkSource West in Morganton.

Supported Employment

Because of varying levels of readiness for work, many consumers benefit from more intensive support services to become acclimated to new employment or remain on the job. After placement, supported employment can mean job training at the worksite for as long as needed or a job coach to assist the employee on a longer-term basis – perhaps with daily, weekly or intermittent visits.

- In FFY 2011, 4,371 consumers received supported employment services.
- Of that number, 968 achieved their employment objectives and many others continued to progress toward theirs.
- Supported employment services may be supplemented by or directly provided by a local, VR-approved community rehabilitation program.

Rehabilitation Engineering

With technology and a commitment to creative problem-solving, VR's rehabilitation engineers help consumers overcome physical barriers in a number of areas, including education, transportation, employment, independent living and recreation. Services can cover: adaptive computer access; augmentative communication; seating/mobility; and home, vehicle, and worksite modifications. Engineers often consult with employers to assist in removing architectural barriers so that new employees with disabilities or current employees who've acquired disabilities may be accommodated.

- In FFY 2011, 1,043 barrier removal projects at consumers' residences were successfully completed, allowing them to remain independent and avoid moving to a care facility.
- During the same period, vehicle modification projects were completed for 83 consumers.
- Rehabilitation engineering projects completed for consumers exceeded \$4 million in cost.

Independent Living

Independence can often mean living in the home and community of choice. To help its consumers achieve that end, the Independent Living program offers evaluation and counseling, vehicle modifications, peer counseling and advocacy, rehabilitation engineering, prosthetics and orthotics, personal assistance services, and assistance with leisure activities. Independent living counselors and program participants jointly plan how to achieve a viable, cost-effective alternative to institutional living.

- In FFY 2011, 4,575 individuals received services under an Individualized Plan for Independent Living (IPIL).
- IPILs were completed by 1,898 program participants.
- Personal assistance services were provided to 313 individuals at an average cost of \$12,487 per year.

Assistive Technology

For people of all ages and disabilities, assistive technology devices can make everyday living more independent. Offering access in all 100 counties, VR's Assistive Technology (AT) staff demonstrates how assistive technology can improve computer use, daily living activities, mobility, communication, education, leisure, alarm systems, and environmental controls. AT offers short-term loans for trying out devices, information/referral services, rights advocacy for individuals and families, and financial resource information. During 2011, the Assistive Technology Program:

- Provided 8,726 individuals with equipment loans or demonstrations.
- Provided training and support services to 32,965 individuals.
- Co-sponsored the twentieth annual Assistive Technology Expo with 1,351 attendees.

Disability Determination

Under an agreement with the Social Security Administration, Disability Determination Services receives applications from SSA offices across the state and adjudicates Social Security disability and Supplemental Security Income disability payments. Disability Determination Services performs the same function with Medicaid claims received from the state's county departments of social services.

- In FFY 2011, DDS closed 224,757 cases involving Social Security Disability Income, Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid disability benefits.
- The average time for processing SSDI cases – from receipt to closure – was 108 days.
- The average time for processing Medicaid claims– from DDS receipt to closure – was 36 days.

Client Assistance Program

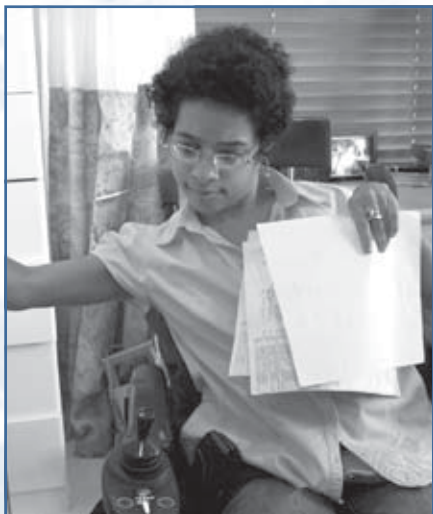
The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is a federally funded program that serves anyone seeking information, applying for services or receiving services from agencies receiving federal monies under the Rehabilitation Act. These include the Division of Vocational

Rehabilitation Services, the Division of Services for the Blind, the independent living rehabilitation programs within those divisions, and the state's centers for independent living. Services include bridging gaps that may occur in accessing rehabilitation services, assisting with the appeals process and providing information and referral.

- In FFY 2011, CAP increased its information and referrals to individuals by 11.4 percent, and
- Provided outreach to 27,261 individuals in traditionally unserved or underserved populations.

Self-Employment: An Important Segment of VR Services

Known chiefly for preparing people with disabilities for traditional employment, VR has beefed up efforts to assist more citizens with starting their own businesses. Our consumers' self-employment successes reflect a diversity of gender, geography, ethnicity, disabilities and business types. Here are three:



Maria Owens



Walter Rose

- Maria Owens has cerebral palsy, vision impairment, a mild developmental disability – and a desire to contribute to her own support. Her VR counselor helped Maria grow her shredding business into "Security Shredding Service of Raleigh." With the heavy-duty shredder, adjustable worktable, document containers and office supplies that VR equipped her with, she provides service to doctor's offices, businesses – and at least one client in Alaska. "I do everything myself, I'm my own boss," she says with a smile "and I make my own hours."

- With his asthma and allergies, the dust from Walter Rose's indoor carpentry work had begun to threaten his livelihood. After providing medical treatments for his breathing, Walter's VR counselor assisted with a business plan that emphasized chiefly outdoor projects. VR also helped him replace his hand tools with power tools and supported the advertising and accounting services he needed to grow his business. Now the owner of Appalachian Windows and Roofing, Walter provides Bakersville-area homeowners with new roofs and replacement windows.
- After a rigid, 40-hour work week, her fibromyalgia and connective-tissue disorder began to leave Dena Howard of Murphy with debilitating fatigue. In search of a more flexible schedule, she decided to take over a fledgling photography business that her daughter Courtnie was about to give up. Armed with a business plan developed with help from Tri-County Community College's small business center, Dena approached VR for support. The local office provided her new camera equipment and now, with some effective advertising, Dena has embarked on a new, more flexible career as a full-time photographer.

With revised self-employment policies, statewide staff training and a new self-employment program specialist, VR has embarked on a fresh commitment to provide small-business supports to North Carolinians who won't allow disability to stand in the way of successful employment.

North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Data Summary: Federal Fiscal Year 2010 – 2011

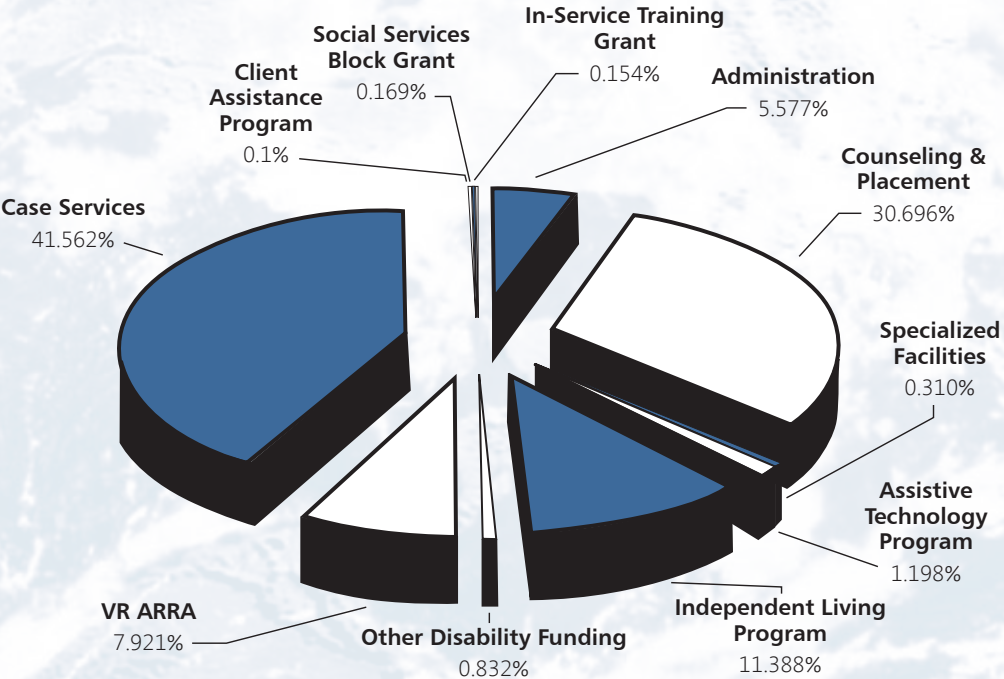
Overview: Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Services	
Consumers Served in FFY 2011	59,349
Consumers still developing an Individualized Plan of Employment at the last day of the FFY	5,544
Consumers Served through Individualized Plans of Employment	46,235
Consumers still receiving services at the last day of the FFY	35,023
Successful employment outcomes	6,303

Earnings for Consumers with Successful Employment Outcomes			
Average Earnings	Weekly Earnings	Monthly Earnings	Annual Earnings
At Case Opening	\$49.53	\$214.64	\$2,575.71
At Case Closure	\$279.97	\$1,213.20	\$14,558.58
Average Increase	\$230.44	\$998.57	\$11,982.87
Total Increase	\$1,447,623	\$6,273,033	\$75,276,396

Consumers by Disability: Vocational Rehabilitation / Independent Living		
Primary Disability	VR Eligible Served	IL Eligible Served
Sensory/Communicative	2,691	271
Physical	16,400	5,028
Cognitive	18,403	2
Mental Illness	15,349	5
Other Mental Disabilities	6,503	2
Major Impairment not yet recorded	3	3
Total	59,349	5,311

Statewide Overview: Independent Living Rehabilitation Program	
Consumers Served in FFY 2011	5,311
Consumers still receiving services at the last day of the FFY	2,266
Independent Living Plans of Services Completed	1,898
Individuals Receiving Personal Assistance Services	313
Average per person cost for personal assistance services	\$12,487.23

FFY 2011 Program Expenditures



Administration \$8,269,760	VR ARRA \$11,745,997
Counseling & Placement \$45,520,551	Case Services \$61,633,918
Specialized Facilities \$459,519	Client Assistance Program \$288,363
Assistive Technology Program \$1,776,661	Social Services Block Grant \$251,018
Independent Living Program \$16,888,193	In-Service Training Grant \$228,213
Other Disability Funding \$1,233,306	

VR “All-Stars”

North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Services has honored staff members in Washington, Raleigh and Charlotte with its tenth annual, statewide “VR All-Star Awards.” The categories and winners are:

- **Leadership** – Daniel Stevens, a rehabilitation education specialist in Washington, was cited for outstanding achievement in leadership. The award praises Stevens for being a driving force in establishing the agency’s dual-customer approach to serving people with disabilities and their prospective employers as co-equal customers.
- **Customer Service** – Honored for customer service was Melinda Remaley, a business services coordinator in the Raleigh central administrative office. The award cites Remaley for the “organized, detailed and caring way” she goes about her job, frequently working behind the scenes to make sure all details fall into place and challenges are overcome.
- **Creativity** – Cited for creativity was Celeste Helling, a speech-language pathologist in the agency’s Charlotte assistive technology service center. The award honors Helling for creative service delivery to people with disabilities, as exemplified by her development of free software to assist in evaluating her consumers’ speech and language skills.

The three were chosen from 11 recipients of the division’s regional “Superstar Awards.” Employee volunteers manage the awards program in which agency staff nominate and vote on their co-workers.

Director Linda Harrington thanked the honorees and congratulated them “on achieving the greatest honor this agency bestows.... With this highest statewide recognition, you have been honored by your co-workers as ‘the best of the best.’”

[Former] Health and Human Services Secretary Lanier M. Cansler also congratulated the recipients, saying that the work of the division “is an integral, important part of the department’s mission to serve the people of North Carolina, most especially those with disabilities. The contributions for which you’ve been recognized are indispensable in carrying out that work.”



Daniel Stevens



Melinda Remaley



Celeste Helling

State Rehabilitation Council: 2010-11

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Linda Harrington, Director
Jacqueline Tetterton

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